GOVERNMENT IN JAMESTOWN, 1619

LEVEL
Elementary

GUIDING QUESTION
What did the English government look like at Jamestown in 1619?

VIRGINIA STANDARDS AND HISTORICAL SKILLS
SOL: VS. 3d
Analyzing and interpreting primary sources, analyzing the impact of geographic features; organizing information

LESSON OVERVIEW
1619 was a year of many firsts for the Virginia colony, including the first legislative assembly held in English North America. This initial meeting of the General Assembly convened in the choir of the Jamestown church and consisted of the governor, his Council, and elected representatives from all of the settled areas of Virginia. The assembly marked the beginning of representative government, based on English law and political institutions, in what is now the United States of America and is the antecedent of today’s Virginia General Assembly, the oldest legislative body in English America. In this lesson, students will explore the first meeting of the General Assembly in August 1619 as an example of representative legislature by 1) identifying the burgesses and locations they represented using a map of the early settlements, and 2) working in groups to analyze the primary source, “Laws Enacted by the First General Assembly of Virginia.”

MATERIALS
- “Guardians of Jamestown, 1619” video clip: “The First General Assembly Meeting in Virginia”
- Map and Map Key: Towns, Plantations, Settlements, and Communities in Virginia, 1607-1624
- Student Worksheet: Participants of the First General Assembly Meeting at Jamestown
- Excerpts from the “Laws Enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia”
PROCEDURE

Warm up/Staging the Question
1. Discuss with students: If we wanted to decide on new rules for our school, how could everyone have a voice without all of the students in our school sharing their ideas?
2. Introduce the lesson on government at Jamestown by showing the “Guardians of Jamestown, 1619” video clip, “The First General Assembly Meeting in Virginia”. Discuss what students learned as a class.

Main Activity
1. Assign each student the name of one of the representatives that was present at the first General Assembly meeting. Have students find their partner (by plantation/city). Students will work with their partners to find the plantation/city that they will represent at the first General Assembly meeting on the [map](#) and record the matching number on the [student worksheet](#). Discuss as a class the connection between the James River and the locations of the first 11 settlements.
2. Place students in new groups, and distribute 1-2 of the laws passed at the first General Assembly to each group. You may choose to have students read an abridged version of the “[Laws Enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia](#)” beforehand or only have students focused on their assigned law(s).
3. In their groups, students will analyze their law(s) by answering the following questions:
   - What does your law say?
   - What do you think it means?
   - Why do you think this law was necessary?
   - Do you think it was fair? Why or why not?
   - Do you think this law should be changed? If so, how would you change it? Try to reach a consensus in order to make a recommendation to the Virginia Company.

   Note: This lesson could be adapted to a digital format by posting the questions in Google Classroom, and assigning different colors for group responses.
4. Have students discuss their analysis of the laws as a class.
5. As a closing activity, have students respond to the following question: “In your own words, what did the government at Jamestown look like in 1619?”
EXCERPTS FROM THE
“LAWS ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA”

The following is a simplified version of some of the laws passed by the General Assembly in 1619. (Courtesy of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).

All persons shall attend services on the Sabbath, both in the morning and afternoon. All those who bear arms shall bring their swords, powder and shot and everyone who shall disobey this law shall forfeit three shillings each time for the use of the church unless lawfully excused. If a servant in this case shall willfully neglect his master’s command, he shall suffer bodily punishment.

If any man is found to be an idler, though a freedman, it shall be lawful for that incorporation of plantation to which he belongs, to appoint him a master to serve for wages, until he shows apparent signs of amendment.

If anyone gambles at dice or cards, he shall lose all his winnings and both winners and losers shall forfeit ten shillings each, with one ten shilling to go to the person who reported him and the rest to charitable uses in the location where the fault is committed.

If anyone is found to be drunk, he shall be reproved privately by the Minister the first time, the second time he shall be reproved publicly, and the third time he will lie in bolts [leg irons] for 12 hours in the house of the Provost Marshall and will pay his fee.

Every man may trade with the Indians, except for the servants upon pain of whipping.

No man may sell or give any of the greater hoes to the Indians.

No man may go above twenty miles from his dwelling place, nor upon any voyage whatsoever shall be absent for seven days without first having made known to the Governor or commander of the place where he lives.

No Englishman may bring injury or oppression against the Indians whereby the present peace might be disturbed and ancient quarrels might be revived.

TOWNS, PLANTATIONS, SETTLEMENTS, AND COMMUNITIES IN VIRGINIA, 1607-1624
(The sites of Richmond, Williamsburg, and Norfolk are shown but the cities did not exist at the time.)
Adapted from Hatch, Charles E., The First Seventeen Years: Virginia 1607-1624 (1957)
MAP KEY

1 Pasbehegh Country - 1617
1A Argall Town - 1617
1B Pasbehegh - c.1617
1C “The Maine” - 1608
2 Smith’s (Southampton) Hundred - 1617
3 “Tanks Weyanoke” - c.1616
4 Swinhows - Bef. 1622
5 Westover - c.1619
6 Berkeley Town and Hundred - 1619
7 Causey’s Care (or “Clears”) - c.1613
8 West and Shirley Hunred - c.1613
9 Upper Hundred - “Curis” - c.1613
10 “Diggs His Hundred” - c.1613
11 The “Citty of Henricus” (Henrico) - 1611
12 Arrahatock - Bef. 1619
13 The College Lands - c.1619
14 The Falls - 1609
15 Falling Creek - c.1619
16 Sheffield’s Plantation - Bef. 1622
17 Proctor’s Plantation - Bef. 1622
18 Coxendale - c.1611
19 “Bermuda City” (Charles City) Incorp.
19A Bermuda Hundred - 1613
19B Rochdale Hundred - 1613
19C Bermuda City - 1613
20 Plercey’s Plantation - c.1620
21 Jordan’s Journey - c.1619
22 Woodleefe’s Plantation - c.1619
23 Chaplain’s Choice - c.1623
24 Truelove’s Plantation - c.1621
25 “Powle-Brooke” or Merchant’s Hope - 1619
26 Maylock’s Plantation - c.1618
27 Flowerdieu Hundred - Plercey’s Hundred - c.1618
28 “Captain Spilmans Divident” Bef. 1622
29 Ward’s Plantation - c.1619
30 Martin’s Brandon - c.1617
31 “Paces-Paines” - 1620
32 Burrows’ Mount - c.1624
33 Plantations “Over the river from Jamestown”
33A Treasurer’s Plantation - c.1621
33B Hugh Crowder’s Plantation - c.1622
33C Edward Blaney’s Plantation - c.1624
33D Roger Smith’s Plantation - c.1622
33E Samuel Mathews’ Plantation - c.1622
33F The Eastern Shore - c.1614
34 Hog Island - 1609
35 Lawne’s Plantation - 1619
36 Warrascoyack (Bennett’s Plantation) - 1621
37 “Basse’s Choyse” - 1622
38 Nansemond - 1609
39 The Eastern Shore - c.1614
40 Elizabeth City (Kecoughtan) - 1610
41 Newport News - 1621
42 Blunt Point - c.1621
43 Mulbery Island - c.1617
44 Martin’s Hundred - 1618
45 Archer’s Hope - c.1619
46 “Neck-of-Land neare James Citty” - Bef. 1624
PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING AT JAMESTOWN

Directions: Analyze the map to locate the plantation/city that you will represent at the first General Assembly meeting. Record the matching number on the table.

**GOVERNOR**  Sir George Yeardley  
**SPEAKER**  Master John Pory  
**GOVERNOR’S COUNCILORS**  Captain Nathaniel Powell, Master Samuel Macock, Master John Rolfe, Captain Francis West, Master John Pory, Master William Wickam

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAP NUMBER</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>BURGESSSES</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James City</td>
<td>Captain William Powell; Ensign William Spense</td>
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<td>Charles City</td>
<td>Samuel Sharpe; Samuel Jordan</td>
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<td>City of Henricus</td>
<td>Thomas Dowse; John Polentine</td>
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<td>Kiccwotan</td>
<td>Captain William Tucker; William Capp</td>
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<td>Smythe’s Hundred</td>
<td>Captain Thomas Graves; Mr. Walter Shelley</td>
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<td>Martin’s Hundred</td>
<td>Mr. John Boys; John Jackson</td>
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<td>Argall’s Guifte</td>
<td>Mr. Thomas Pawlett; Mr. Edward Gourgaing</td>
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<td>Flowerdieu Hundred</td>
<td>Ensign Roffingham; Mr. Jefferson</td>
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<td>Captain Lawnes Plantation</td>
<td>Captain Christopher Lawne; Ensign Washer</td>
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<td>Captain Ward’s Plantation</td>
<td>Captain Ward; Lieutenant Gibbes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Martin’s Brandon Plantation</td>
<td>Thomas Davis; Robert Stacy</td>
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